



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.

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<i>The Michigan Passenger Editor and Webmaster, Larry Sobczak</i>	
<i>ON TRACK Editor, Kay Chase</i>	

2016 MEETINGS

- 16 January** – REO Town Depot (former Grand Trunk Depot), Lansing
- February** – Cancelled
- 12 March** – Howell Public Library
- 16 April** – New Buffalo Library
- 21 May** – Jackson District Library
- 11 June** – Dearborn Amtrak Station
- 9 July** – Executive Committee
- 17,18 August** – Marquette, 4th Annual MI Rail Conference
- 24 September** –Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
- 8 October** – Dowagiac City Hall
- 12 November** – Lapeer Amtrak Station
- December** – Executive Committee

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

Speakers Inspire at MARP Annual Meeting

Living up to his star billing, John Robert Smith had MARP members ready to conquer the world when he addressed the annual meeting at Durand Union Station in September. He began by asking our indulgence to show a **short video** showing the excitement generated along the Gulf Coast earlier this year when an Amtrak inspection train filled with dignitaries made the journey from New Orleans to Jacksonville as the opening salvo in the effort by the **Southern Rail Commission** to restore passenger train service wiped out by Hurricane Katrina.

Smith's keynote address was titled ***A Sense of Place: Passenger Rail--The Missing Link***. He spoke of a vision of the future anchored in the past and built on current demographic and economic realities. He described some of the ways in which cities are going back to the future in response to the desires of both the retiring baby boomers and the upcoming millennials to work and play in urban environments. We were particularly impressed with a series of slides showing the transformation of a bleak, automobile-centered stretch of urban landscape into a vibrant and inviting neighborhood. An important point here was that transformations of this sort do not need a huge upfront investment, but can develop incrementally over a period of time. Smith spoke at some length about the transformations that took place in his community of Meridian, Mississippi, during his tenure as mayor. Spurred by the restoration of Union Station into a vibrant community center on Amtrak's *Crescent* route, private developers invested an additional \$135 million in the downtown area. The restored opera house brings world class entertainment to the area and the historic City Hall again functions as a center of municipal life. Smith concluded his remarks with the hope that we plan, not just for tomorrow, but for our grandchildren's grandchildren. [View the slides here.](#)

The upbeat message of John Robert Smith was echoed by the other speakers for the day. Al Johnson, Manager of Railroad Operations in MDOT's Office of Rail, gave a **slide presentation** updating us on the ongoing and proposed rail projects in our state. Along with the track upgrades between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, completed in 2015, and this summer's work

(MEETING continues on next page)



MARP Member Meeting

Saturday, November 12

Noon – 2:30 p.m.

Lapeer Amtrak Station

78 Howard Street, Lapeer MI 48446

Map & Directions

T.J. Gaffney, author of *Images of Rail: Rails Around the Thumb*, will share with us his extensive knowledge of railroading in the Lapeer and eastern Thumb areas. Meeting details are on the website www.marp.org If you are interested in carpooling to the meeting, send email to marprail@yahoo.com.

(MEETING continued from previous page)

on the Battle Creek to Ypsilanti portion, now complete, it is expected that train control and signal work throughout the corridor in the 2017 construction season will complete the *Wolverine* route improvements on the Michigan portion of the line. [View the slides here.](#)

Alma Wheeler Smith, a member of the Southeast Michigan Regional Transit Authority Board of Directors, rounded out the day's program with a slide presentation titled **The RTA Transit Plan: Connecting Our Region**. She reminded us that the mission of the RTA is to manage and secure transportation resources that significantly enhance mobility options, improve quality of life for residents and increase economic viability for the region – the same factors espoused by our keynote speaker when he spoke of ensuring economic competitiveness in a world of changing demographics by providing access to jobs, education, health care, and entertainment. [View the slides here.](#)

The **Regional Master Transit Plan**, released in August, was developed after rigorous analysis of current conditions and deficiencies and in consultation with a broad spectrum of the populace. The plan is built on the services currently provided by SMART, DDOT, AAATA, and People Mover, and creates a framework to coordinate these services for a more seamless rider experience. The plan also brings new premium rapid transit options including: (1) regional rail service, (2) four bus rapid transit routes, (3) express airport service, and (4) improved paratransit options.

Ending our day with the business portion of the meeting, MARP members voted to endorse the coalition **Citizens for Connecting Our Communities** which is coordinating the campaign for passage of the RTA millage request on the November ballot in Wayne, Washtenaw, Oakland, and Macomb counties.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

You can make a difference on November 8th
[CLICK HERE](#) to sign up to hand out important
 RTA information to election day voters.



Vote on November 8



Supporters and Volunteers of Michigan Operation Lifesaver are invited to attend the next quarterly meeting on Thursday, November 10 at 9:30am at **Durand Union Station**. Luncheon hosted by Jon Cool, Executive Director, Michigan Railroads Association. RSVP to SamCrowl@comcast.net.

Community Meetings Will Update WALLY Plans



The **North-South Commuter Rail (WALLY)** is a proposed 27-mile long commuter rail service on existing tracks that would connect Ann Arbor and Howell, with intermediate stops along the way. Three upcoming meetings will update the community on service options evaluated, costs, and ridership estimates. Each meeting will begin with a formal presentation followed by Q&A and the opportunity to offer your ideas and comments.

Wednesday, November 9, 7:00-9:00 PM

Northfield Township Offices
 8350 Main St, Whitmore Lake MI 48189

Monday, November 14, 6:30-8:30 PM

Bennett Recreation Center
 925 W. Grand River Ave, Howell MI 48843

Tuesday, November 15, 6:30-8:30

Slauson Middle School
 1019 W. Washington, Ann Arbor MI 48104

Let IN-DOT Know You Support *The Hoosier State*



Indiana supporters of passenger trains are encouraged to complete an online survey at in.gov/indot/3588.htm and attend one of three rail planning open houses. Presentations will begin at 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. local time at the dates and locations listed below. Before and after the presentations, you will have the opportunity to speak informally with IN-DOT and consultant staff.

Thursday, November 10

INDOT Vincennes District
 3650 South U.S. Highway 41, Vincennes IN 47591

Tuesday, November 15

INDOT LaPorte District
 315 E. Boyd Boulevard, LaPorte IN 46352

Thursday, November 17

INDOT Indianapolis Sub-District
 7105 Brookville Road, Indianapolis IN 46239

Comment Invited on *Hiawatha* Expansion

Spurred by a doubling in ridership on the Chicago to Milwaukee *Hiawatha* route since 2003 – it now tops 807,000 rides annually – the states of Illinois and Wisconsin are currently studying a proposal to add three daily round trips to the schedule for a total of ten daily round trips. An environmental assessment is out for public comment. You are invited to email your comments to DOTChicagoMilwaukeePassengerRailEA@dot.wi.gov.

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the environmental assessment document and a variety of informational materials, along with a mailing address for submitting written comments.

CORRECTION: "MARP Elects Officers" in last month's issue inadvertently neglected to recognize Hugh Gurney for his valuable assistance as a member of the nominating committee, along with Clark Charnetski and Steve Sobel.

Thank you Hugh, Clark and Steve!

Chad Cushman Named President of Indian Trails, Inc.

Chad Cushman has been named president of *Indian Trails, Inc.*—the parent company of *Michigan Flyer*—by its board of directors. He succeeds Gordon Mackay, who stepped down in August after 30 years in the position. Mackay will serve as chairman of the board of the family-run, Owosso-based company.

Cushman is well known to MARP in his role as *Indian Trails'* point person in working with *Amtrak* to establish Thruway bus routes connecting residents in 27 Michigan communities, ranging from Houghton in the Upper Peninsula to Tawas City on the Lake Huron shore, with Amtrak train service in the state. Jim Wallington, a member of MARP's Executive Committee, has worked with Cushman over the years and cites Chad's enthusiasm for taking on challenges and figuring out ways to expand the Thruway system in Michigan. "What amazes me about Chad is his refreshing willingness, as an inter-city bus person, to work with Amtrak, MDOT, and MARP for the betterment of Michigan's traveling public," he says.

Similarly, Cushman was instrumental in developing *Indian Trails'* public-private "AirRide" partnership with the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority in 2012, for which *Michigan Flyer* operates 13 daily scheduled runs between Ann Arbor and Detroit Metro Airport.

"I am honored, privileged and excited to follow in the footsteps of our company's visionary leaders—from founders Wayne and Cora Taylor, to Bill Himburg and Gordon Mackay," said Cushman. "They were always looking for innovative ways to improve and expand transportation options for Michigan residents, and to enhance our customers' experience with us, and so am I."

Cushman is just the fifth *Indian Trails* president in the company's 106-year history. Starting in 1999, he served as charter sales director until 2008, when he was promoted to vice president of business. He has since overseen day-to-day operations of sales, accounting and administration—including those of *Michigan Flyer*, which was launched by Mackay and Ody Norkin of Skybird Okemos Travel almost a decade ago



In September 2010, Cushman accepted MARP's Special Achievement Award presented at the opening of *Indian Trails'* new passenger facility in St. Ignace.

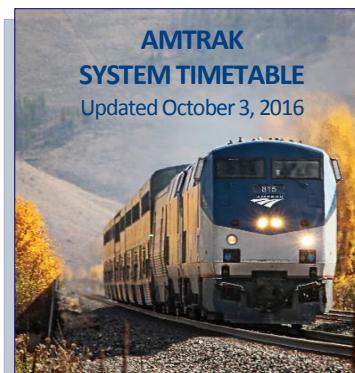
Amtrak System Timetable

To the consternation of many, another tradition has bitten the dust. Due to budgetary constraints, Amtrak is no longer printing the National System Timetable. However, the publication will be available online.

It appears that the online address (url) will change each time an update is published. However, you should always be able to link to the most recent issue by going to

amtrak.com/train-schedules-timetables

and clicking on the hot-links in the middle of the page.



Amtrak no longer prints copies of the National System Timetable

To View the Current Issue

[CLICK HERE](#)

To Download and Print

Amtrak Adds Trains for the Holidays

Three Cheers! Michigan Line track work has wrapped up for the year and **normal train schedules** have returned.

Now, to handle holiday demand, Amtrak and MDOT have announced 10 extra trains for Michigan and 8 extra trains for Illinois over the Thanksgiving weekend. Extra *Wolverine* trains operate on Wed Nov 23, Sat Nov 26, and Sun Nov 27. Extra *Pere Marquette* trains operate on Wed Nov 23 and Sun Nov 27.

As always, travelers are urged to make plans early to assure seats and to garner the lowest fares.

[Michigan Special Thanksgiving Timetable](#)

[Illinois Special Thanksgiving Timetable](#)

UP Express trains run every 15 minutes connecting Union Station in downtown Toronto with Union Pearson International Airport. Since merging with GO Transit in March and cutting fares by more than half, ridership has more than tripled. The average daily ridership stands at 7,657. To kick off a three-day holiday weekend on Friday 29 July, 11,000 riders climbed aboard.

View from elsewhere . . .

"Thousands of Cubs fans are making their way from Chicago to Cleveland for Game 7 of the World Series tonight. Throughout the series fans from both teams have been making the journey between Chicago and Cleveland either by plane, train or automobile. This is a great time to highlight how the Lakeshore corridor could provide a more viable option between these two great Midwestern cities ... We think that some simple improvements such as level boarding, high performance trains and better amenities would make the service more attractive. A Chicago-Cleveland trip time of less than five and a half hours could be accomplished by increasing average speeds throughout the route by just 5 mph and increasing the top speed between 47th street and east Gary to 79 mph."

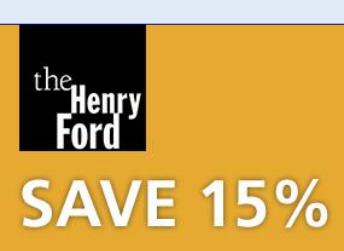
-- Dylan Hayward, Midwest High Speed Rail Association Program Manager, blogging November 2 on what he is calling **The World Series Corridor** and musing about how All Aboard Florida's **Brightline** could be a model for the **Lakeshore Corridor Initiative**. Click on the above links to read more.



Photo courtesy of Craig Sanders

BO Tower Goes Dark

Craig Sanders caught Wolverine Train No. 351 as it passed the **BO Tower** in Kalamazoo this past summer. With the completion of track and signal work between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, dispatching has been taken over by Amtrak. The 44-lever Saxby & Farmer interlocking machine was removed in June of 2014, after nearly a century of service. With the closing of the BO Tower, the only working tower left in Michigan is at Delray in Detroit. Sanders blogs at **Amtrak in the Heartland** and has published a book of the same name.



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